

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

A Soviet View of World Events

A Speech by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the United Nations, September 23, 1960

Our century is the century of the struggle for freedom, the century in which nations are liberating themselves from foreign domination. The peoples desire a worthwhile life and are fighting to secure it.

Victory has already been won in many countries and lands. But we cannot rest on our laurels, for we know that tens of millions of human beings are still languishing in colonial slavery and are suffering grave hardships. . . .

Every intelligent individual gives some thought to what scientific progress, what this great twentieth century, is bringing mankind. Some rightly say that the world has been given new horizons, unlimited opportunities for the creation of abundant material wealth and for the ample satisfaction of human needs. With no less justification, others point to the great danger of scientific and technical achievements being used, not for these beneficial purposes, but primarily for the production of appalling means of destruction. These means of destruction are not being used at the present time. But, in the last analysis, they are produced to be used.

This argument between optimists and pessimists reflects the facts of our times. The most important of these facts is the conflict between two trends or lines of policy in international relations. I am not, of course, referring here to differences in social systems, since this is a domestic issue, which can and must be settled only by nations and States themselves. . . .

These two lines of policy in international relations have long been in opposition. Although parallel lines never meet in elementary geometry they may come into collision in international affairs. That would be a fearful moment indeed. Only ten or fifteen years ago, few could predict the outcome of the struggle between these two lines of international policy. In the year 1960, however, only the blind can fail to see how the majority of peoples are becoming more and more positively and plainly convinced of the need to maintain peace.

The peoples of all countries—workers, peasants, intellectuals and the bourgeoisie, excluding a small handful of militarists and monopolists—want not war but peace, and peace alone. And if,

therefore, the peoples actively, fight to tie the hands of the militarist and monopolist circles, peace can be ensured. . . .

No one can dispute the fact that the Soviet Union has been unsparing in its efforts to ensure the continuation of this welcome trend in the development of international relations. But the sinister forces which profit from the maintenance of international tension are clinging tenaciously to their positions. Though only a handful of individuals is involved, they are quite powerful and exert a strong influence on the policy of their respective States. A major effort is therefore required to break their resistance. As soon as the policy of easing international tension begins to yield tangible results, they immediately resort to extreme measures in order to ensure that the people should feel no relief; they strain every nerve to plunge the world back again and again into an atmosphere of gloom and to exacerbate international tension.

We saw a dangerous manifestation of the work of these forces last spring when the aircraft of one of the largest States Members of the United Nations, the United States of America, treacherously invaded the air space of the Soviet Union and that of other States. What is more, the United States has elevated such violations of international law into a principle of deliberate State policy.

The aggressive intrusion into our country by a United States aircraft and the whole course of the United States Government's subsequent behavior showed the peoples that they were dealing with a calculated policy on the part of the United States Government, which was trying to substitute brigandage for international law and treachery for honest negotiations between sovereign and equal States. . . .

The flights by the United States spy aircraft are also instructive in another respect. They have shown up the danger to peace presented by the network of United States bases in which dozens of States in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America are enmeshed.

Like a deep-seated form of acute infection in a living organism, these bases disrupt the normal political and economic life of the States upon which they have been foisted. They hinder the establishment of normal relations between those States and their neighbors. How, indeed, can there be any question of normal relations if the people of these neighboring countries cannot sleep

peacefully, if they have to live with the threat of being subjected to an annihilating blow whenever the United States militarists take it into their heads to embark on fresh acts of provocation? . . .

United States relations with Cuba are illuminating. As you know, before the victory of the popular revolution, all branches of the Cuban economy were wholly dominated by United States monopolies which earned vast profits from exploiting the working people of Cuba and the wealth of their fertile soil.

Some people in the United States occasionally like to boast that the standard of living in their country is higher than that in other countries. There is no gainsaying the fact that the standard of living in the United States is now higher than in Cuba, but why is that so? Is it because the Cuban people are less industrious or because the Cuban soil is less fertile? No, this of course is not the reason. The Cuban people are well known for their industry and for their attachment to their country and to their soil. The explanation is entirely different. For many years the fruits of the Cuban people's toil were enjoyed not by the Cuban people but by United States monopolies. Is it therefore surprising that in 1958, for example, the *per capita* income in Cuba was 6.5 times lower than in the United States? This telling fact speaks for itself. . . .

We are all witnesses to the fact that many peoples are being continually subjected to hostile acts and crude pressure by a certain group of States which seek to set at naught the legitimate interests and rights of other countries. This is why the international situation is fraught with acute conflicts, the danger of which is intensified by the mounting arms race.

It is quite evident that international relations cannot continue on such a basis, as that would mean a headlong descent to the abyss. It is the sacred duty, of the United Nations to uphold the sovereign rights of States, and to press for the re-establishment of international relations on a sound legal basis and for the ending of the arms race.

Unfortunately, the policy of violating the inalienable rights of peoples is still in evidence in the United Nations itself.

Take, for instance, the question of the representation in the United Nations of the Chinese people. To impede the reinstatement of the Peoples' Republic of China in its legitimate rights in the United Nations, simply because the socialist regime of that State is not to the taste of the leading circles of certain Western countries, and in particular of the United States, is to disregard the facts; it betokens the absence of any desire for a relaxation of international tension; it means that the interests of strengthening world peace and of developing international cooperation are being sacrificed

to the narrow political calculations of a small group of States. This situation is inimical to peace and is degrading to the United Nations. . . .

Is the solution of major international problems really conceivable today without the participation of the Peoples' Republic of China? Is it possible to solve these problems without the participation of India, Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon, the United Arab Republic, Iraq, Ghana, Guinea and the other States? If anyone has this idea, let him try to disregard the opinion and the votes of the representatives of the Asian, African and Latin American States here in the United Nations. It is true that the appearance of the new Asian and African States in the United Nations is giving rise to apprehension in certain Western countries. More than that, people are beginning to discuss ways of limiting the further influx of newly-emerging States into the United Nations.

As regards the Soviet Union, I can say frankly that we are glad to see a great number of new States making their appearance in the United Nations. We have always opposed and we shall continue to oppose any curtailment of the rights of peoples who have won their national independence. We share with these States the desire to preserve and strengthen peace, to create on our planet conditions for the peaceful coexistence and cooperation of countries regardless of their political and social structure, in accordance with the peaceful principles proclaimed at the Conference of African and Asia States at Bandung. The facts show that the liberation of nations and peoples under colonial domination leads to an improvement in international relations, an increase in international cooperation and the reinforcement of world peace. . . .

It would be difficult to exaggerate the vast significance which the abolition of the colonial system would have for the entire world. Everyone knows that the economics of the colonies and the Trust Territories are at present subordinated to the mercenary interests of foreign monopolies, and the industrialization of these countries is being deliberately impeded. Imagine that the situation has changed and that these countries and territories, having become independent, are in a position to make ample use of their rich natural resources and to proceed with their industrialization, and that a better life has begun for their peoples. This would lead to a tremendous growth in the capacity of the world market, which would no doubt have a beneficial effect, not only on the economic development of the countries of the East but also on the economies of the industrially developed countries of the West. . . .

A year has elapsed since the General Assembly adopted the resolution on general and complete disarmament. Having regard to the present pace of life, that is a comparatively long period of time and we need have no doubt that those engaged in the production of weapons and in the perfection and invention of new lethal means have not let it go to waste.

But in the sphere of disarmament not the slightest progress has been made in the past year. What are the reasons for this state of affairs to which we are forced to refer with great regret and serious concern? Who is preventing the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on general and complete disarmament, perhaps the most important and outstanding decision in the history of the United Nations? Who is making it impossible to break the deadlock on the problem of disarmament?

The facts show that the absence of any progress towards the solution of the disarmament problem is the consequence of the position taken by the United States and by certain other States linked with it through NATO.

Throughout the work of the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament, the Western Powers refused to start working out a treaty on general and complete disarmament and in every way avoided discussion of the substance of the Soviet programme of general and complete disarmament which the General Assembly had referred to the Committee for detailed consideration. For their part, they made proposals which provided for neither general nor complete disarmament, nor any disarmament at all, but only for measures of control over armaments, i.e. control without disarmament. However, one cannot but see that the establishment of control without disarmament would be tantamount to setting up an international espionage system which, far from contributing to the consolidation of peace, could, on the contrary, make it easier for a potential aggressor to realize his plans which pose a threat to the people. . . .

The Soviet Government, together with the Governments of a number of other States, was compelled to suspend its participation in the work of the Ten-Nation Committee which the Western Powers had turned into a screen for concealing the arms race. It was not easy for the Soviet Government to take this decision, because it was precisely our country that had first raised the issue of general and complete disarmament, and had been doing its utmost to achieve in the Committee a constructive solution to the problem, in strict conformity with the General Assembly resolution. In the circumstances, however, staying on in the Committee would only have meant helping the opponents of disarmament. It was impossible to tolerate attempts to make the great cause of disarmament an object of speculation for purposes inimical to the interests of universal peace.

That is why the Soviet Government has placed the question of disarmament before the United Nations General Assembly, a considerable majority of whose members have no interest whatever in the arms race and sincerely wish to see it brought to an end. . . .

The new Soviet proposal on the question of general and complete disarmament, which is based on the provisions of the proposal dated 2 June 1960, submitted by the Soviet Government to all the Governments of the world for consideration, has been drafted with due regard for all the useful ideas expressed in the past year in the course of the discussions on this question in political and public circles in various countries. This proposal goes a long way towards meeting the position of the Western Powers and this we hope will make for early agreement on disarmament.

We now provide, in particular, that all means of delivering nuclear weapons to their targets should be eliminated in the very first stage of general and complete disarmament; we have worked out detailed measures for effective international control at all stages; and we have taken into account the wish of certain Western Powers that, from the outset, there should be provision for reduction in the strength of armed forces and in conventional armaments. We have also introduced quite a number of other amendments to and modifications of our programme. In our view all these amendments render the programme of general and complete disarmament more concrete and even more realistic and practicable. . . .

The Soviet Government is deeply convinced that only a radical solution of the problem of disarmament, providing for the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons together with the cessation of their manufacture and testing and the destruction of all accumulated stockpiles of these weapons, can accomplish the task of delivering mankind from the threat of nuclear war which hangs over it. This is precisely the aim which the Soviet Union is pursuing in consistently and resolutely advocating general and complete disarmament.

All this, in our view, leads to one important conclusion. In order finally to break the deadlock on the disarmament problem, the General Assembly should call to order those who are hindering its solution and are trying to replace business-like negotiations on disarmament by empty beating about the bush. . . .

The peoples of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Government are striving unrelentingly to have the principles of peaceful coexistence firmly established in relations between States, and to ensure that these principles become the fundamental law of life for the whole of modern society. There is no communist-devised "trick" behind these principles, but simple truths dictated by life itself, such as that relations between all States should develop peacefully, without the use of force, without war and without interference in each other's internal affairs.

I am revealing no secret when I say that we have no liking for capitalism. But we do not want to impose our system on other peoples by force. Let those, then, who determine the policy of States with a different social system from ours, renounce their fruitless and dangerous attempts to dictate their will. It is time they also

recognized that the choice of a particular way of life is the domestic concern of every people. Let us build up our relations having regard to actual realities. That is true peaceful coexistence. . . .

The policy of peaceful coexistence assumes a readiness to solve all outstanding issues without resort to force, by means of negotiations and reasonable compromises. We all know that during the cold war years such questions for the most part did not find a solution, and that led to the creation of dangerous foci of tension in Europe, Asia and other parts of the world.

The Soviet Union considers that, in order to strengthen peace in the Far East and throughout the world, it is most essential to settle the Korean question.

Only madmen could think of settling the Korean question by armed force. The only correct proposal, namely to leave the solution of the question of the peaceful reunification of Korea to the Koreans themselves with no interference from outside, is finding ever wider acceptance. An essential condition for this is the immediate and complete withdrawal of all United States troops from South Korea, for their presence poisons the atmosphere not only in Korea but throughout the Far East and has made possible such shameful facts as the rigging of elections in South Korea. The proposal of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to establish a confederation of North and South Korea is just as reasonable as the proposal of the Government of the German Democratic Republic to set up a confederation of the two German States. It is the only way to lay a sound foundation for the reunification of these States. . . .

We are now firmly convinced that the time has come to take steps to create conditions for an improved functioning both of the United Nations as a whole and of the Organization's executive, working organ. I repeat, the matter relates primarily to the Secretary-General and his staff. We must particularly bear in mind the necessity for certain changes and improvements, with a view to the immediate future. . . .

We consider it reasonable and just for the executive organ of the United Nations to consist not of a single person—the Secretary-General—but of three persons invested with the highest trust of the United Nations, persons representing the States belonging to the three basic groups I have mentioned. The point at issue is not the title of the organ but that this executive organ should represent the States belonging to the military block of the Western Powers, the socialist States and the neutralist States. This composition of the United Nations executive organ would create conditions for a more correct implementation of the decisions taken. . . .

The Soviet Government hopes that the proposals it has raised for questions to be considered at the present session of the General Assembly will meet with support and understanding, since they are prompted by a sincere desire to secure a better life and tranquillity on our planet. . . .

The Soviet Government is ready to do its utmost in order that colonial servitude may be destroyed here and now, that here and now the problems of disarmament may find their concrete and effective solution.

The Soviet Government is ready to do its utmost in order that the testing of nuclear weapons may be prohibited here and now, that this means of mass destruction may be prohibited and destroyed.

It could be said that these are complicated problems and that they cannot be solved at one stroke. But these are problems posed by life itself and they must be solved before it is too late. Their solution cannot be evaded.

In concluding my statement I wish to emphasize once again that the Soviet Government, guided by the interests of the Soviet people, by the interests of the citizens of a free socialist State, once again proposes to all: let us talk, let us argue, but let us settle the questions of general and complete disarmament and let us bury colonialism that is accursed of all mankind. ■

Source

The Internet Modern History Sourcebook, Fordham University, Paul Halsall. Source: United Nations, General Assembly, *Official Records, Fifteenth Session*, pp. 68-84.

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